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UNCLAS COLOMBO 001649

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: NORTHERN MUSLIMS ATTACK LTTE OFFICES,
DECLARE STRIKE AFTER COMMUNITY MEMBER'S KILLING

REF: COLOMBO 1563

1. (U) Muslims in the northern district of Mannar attacked three offices of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) late October 1 after a Muslim was killed in a drive-by shooting three kilometers outside of Mannar town. (Note: Mannar is approximately 175 km southwest of Jaffna Peninsula. The area in which the killing took place is under Government control. End note.) Muslim residents told police they held the LTTE responsible for the killing and demanded an inquiry. On October 2 members of the Muslim community in Mannar staged a demonstration against the LTTE and declared a strike that successfully closed businesses in the town for two days.

2. (SBU) According to the Assistant Superintendent of Police in Mannar, the police chaired a meeting with residents, local clergy, an MP from the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the head of the LTTE's political wing in Mannar in an effort to defuse tensions. As of October 4, according to the police source, a few businesses had reopened, and the situation was returning to normal. He added that so far the police have been unable to verify LTTE involvement in the slaying.

3. (SBU) Comment: Although LTTE aggression against and harassment of Muslims are nothing new, the community's reaction to this latest incident certainly is. The unprecedented violence against LTTE offices and the successful protest reflect both the community's long-simmering resentment against habitual LTTE tactics and, apparently, a newfound confidence that the ceasefire gives them a safe opportunity for dissent. The Mannar strike follows another anti-LTTE "hartal" held by a Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) front in Trincomalee to protest the Tigers' abduction of two Sinhalese home guards (Reftel). Whether Muslims in other areas in the North and East will follow Mannar's example remains to be seen.
LUNSTEAD